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FROM THE EDITOR. . .

Well, we did not make the early publication date we envisioned. The early arrival of the Associate Editor's baby—her first, a boy—and an unusually chaotic opening of the academic year combined to push us back to our more-or-less usual mid-fall schedule.

Although I like to think that all of the issues of this journal are special, this particular issue certainly does merit that designation. All of the papers in this issue are by graduate students, and all of them were submitted for the 1992 Newell Prize. The Newell Prize winner, Michelle Branigan's "Blocks and Matchboxes: Negotiation of a Shared Reality Between Two Siblings," is an excellent piece of scholarship and is surely a harbinger of work to come. The other contest entrants selected for publication, Shaari Freed's "Spooky Activities and Group Loyalty," Laurie McGonnagill' s "Preschool Protolore," and Laura Watson's "The Nature Lore of Children: Functions and Variations," are worthy runners up.

One of the earliest stated functions of the Children's Folklore Section was that of encouraging scholarship in children's folklore. Having the *Children's Folklore Review* as a venue for such scholarship is certainly important, but the establishment of the Newell Prize has been as important if not more important. Encouraging young scholars to pursue topics in children's folklore insures continued work in this area. I think the membership of the Children's Folklore Section can be proud of the ways in which the section is going about its business.

C.W. Sullivan III

Blocks and Matchboxes: Negotiation of a Shared Reality Between Two Siblings

Michelle Branigan

Brian Sutton-Smith has pointed out that if folklorists were to study children's activities and performance then "our ideas of structure and function might. . . change considerably" and we might become less "adult-centric" (68). Goodwin's extended discourse analysis of Philadelphia children, concluding that children tend not to mitigate disputes in the same ways as adults ("Aggravated Correction"), ratifies the idea that researchers, when examining interaction between children, would do well to free themselves of assumptions about communication based on study of adults. Keeping this in mind, this paper examines the dialogue between an eight-year-old boy, Danny, and his six-year-old sister, Crystal, in order to understand the dynamics creating and sustaining a brief episode of their play. They *work* to play, continually meeting in their engagement with each other at the juncture of will and concession.

The play session examined here took place one evening after dinner and before bedtime as the two siblings played with blocks and matchbox cars on their living room floor. Both Danny and Crystal have spent a considerable amount of time with their blocks and are proficient at using every block available to build quite sophisticated structures which sometimes rise higher than their waistlines. This particular evening their play revolved around the construction and use of a parking garage and a church. The opening phrase recorded in this play session reflects the fact that their play began a few minutes before the tape recorder was turned on, as Crystal replied to Danny. "Nuuh uuh, this is the poli:ce." Their play continues for approximately ten minutes, ending only when interrupted by their mother.

Fieldwork Methodology

Situational and temporal constraints dictated the data available for study. Ideally, a videocamera would have been used to capture the kinesic cues accompanying the dialogue. Even had a videocamera been available, however, the intrusiveness of it would have required prolonged initial contact with Danny and Crystal in order that they become comfortable with its presence. As it was, I soon discovered that my *own* presence was intrusive. My intentions were to observe Danny and Crystal at play and to record their dialogue as I took notes on their activity. But in spite of their having known me for years,

both Danny and Crystal remained very aware of my presence in their home throughout the few days available to gather data. It seemed unnatural to them for me to be in their home without talking with their mother, Deborah, and yet when I talked with her, they would extract themselves from their play to join in on our conversation. Crystal also was persistent about wanting to be around me whenever I visited their home and, therefore, would play only infrequently with Danny while I was there.

Deborah, their mother, consequently agreed to discreetly place a tape recorder near them as they played with their blocks and matchboxes one evening before bedtime. Playing together with toys is a routine way for Danny and Crystal to spend a period of time each evening. Whereas during the day they spend a good deal of their time outdoors and typically playing with friends of their own respective ages and genders, rather than with each other, it is common for them to spend their evenings together, arranged with their paraphernalia either in the center of the living room floor or on the floor of Danny's room, playing as their parents go about evening tasks and activities. On this particular night, this pre-bedtime play frame ended, as is usually the case, only when Deborah intervened feeling it was time for Danny and Crystal to go to sleep. As usual case, on this night both Danny and Crystal maneuvered to prolong their play; although a substantial part of their dialogue can be interpreted as conflict-ridden, they ended their play reluctantly.

In spite of my best intentions to unobtrusively document Danny and Crystal at play in their natural environment, it is clear that at some level, at least, on this evening Danny was aware that Deborah was quieter than ordinary. He clearly articulated this awareness near the beginning of the play session:

22 Danny: [to Deborah, their mother] () playin' a game
23 You can't talk?
24 You're not talking.

25 Deborah: Yeah I am.

26 Danny: [chanting] 1-2-3,
27 4-5-6,
28 7-8-9-10
29 11,12.
30 12:00 o'clock.

After gaining a response from Deborah, Danny immediately slipped back into play, absorbed in chanting numbers. With the exception of two further

appeals to Deborah to intervene in disputes later in the dialogue, neither Danny nor Crystal spoke to Deborah, nor, according to Deborah, did they exhibit any other signs of awareness of a change in their usual environment throughout the remainder of their play session.

Data and Transcription

The dialogue between Danny and Crystal was transcribed using a simplified version of the transcription method introduced by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (731-33), as follows:

10[1] Danny:[2] He'd put his **bombs**[3] out on the side
11 and go phheeeooowwww
12 and blow their car to smithereens.

13 Crystal: dheww, dhewww dheww dheww dheww dheww dheww[4] dhewwww

49 Crystal: Ummmm//[5][firmly] **No**. You're not supposed to=

50 Danny: I just have to drop the truck off.

51 Crystal: O:**KAY**.[8] Then I'll have to **dri:ve**[6]**my truck**.[7]

1. Line Number.
2. Speaker. If in parenthesis, indicates uncertainty about speaker's identity.
3. Boldface indicates emphasis.
4. Phonetic lettering indicates simulations of noises, rather than speech; length and sound are rendered as closely as possible to Danny and Crystal's simulations.
5. Double slashes indicate the point at which talk overlaps with talk of subsequent speaker.
6. Lengthening or drawing out of a sound is indicated by a colon following the syllable lengthened; double colons indicate more prolonged lengthening.
7. Punctuation is used to indicate intonation:
   -A period indicates a falling contour.
   -A question mark indicates a rising contour.
   -A comma indicates a falling-rising contour.

8. Capitals indicate increased volume.

> *B1ank parentheses indicate inability to transcribe material; material in parentheses indicate uncertainty about transcribed material.
> *Bracketed materials are descriptive notes.
> * An equals sign indicates that the sentence fades out.

Each of the 244 lines represents a phrase or utterance rather than a turn. Following Marjorie Goodwin ("Processes," and "Aggravated Correction") a "phrase" here refers to a unit of thought or a message whereas a "turn" represents the totality of phrases uttered by one participant before another participant begins to speak. With the exception of three turns by Deborah (lines 25, 146 and 247), the first two of which were provoked by either Danny or Crystal, the entire dialogue is between Danny and Crystal. (Deborah's line 247 is "It's time to go to bed," which effectively ends the play frame.) Although it was not possible to measure pauses and gaps down to tenths of a second, they are reconstructed as accurately as possible in most cases to within a second and, since they are an integral part of the dialogue, have been assigned line numbers. Note that pauses in dialogue do not necessarily reflect lapses in interaction. Danny and Crystal were actively engaged in manipulating blocks and matchboxes. The vocal pauses probably reflect a few moments during which both children were concentrating on physically maneuvering a block or car; the balance of the dialogue suggests that even during lengthy pauses the two remained cognizant of each other's actions. It is important to remember that even if dialogue at any given moment reflects a crack in the play frame, the non-verbal play frame may still be intact at that moment.

Exploring the Parameters of the Play Frame

Goffman discusses frames constructed by individuals *(Frame Analysis);* here Danny and Crystal are constructing a play frame together. The blocks and matchboxes are objects that serve as both map and territory as Danny and Crystal execute their joint transformation into other objects. The placement and identification of "things" at times solidifies the play structure. Things serve as physical representations through which Danny and Crystal can act and as spatial markers enabling them to work within a spatial frame with its own rules about distance and location. In this sense, things are signs: One matchbox represents a truck, another a police car. As signs, things share the

common property of being able to sustain innumerable transformations based upon no more than shared imagination and thought; a block can represent a church door one moment and a parking garage wall a moment later.

The momentary nature of play and the successive transformations it sustains are especially characteristic of children's play (McDowell "Notes"); it echoes the transitoriness which characterizes child friendships (Opie and Opie 324). In dialogic fashion, play both requires and is a reflection of fluid social organization. Things—here, blocks and matchboxes—are an ideal format for experimenting with transformations and for testing and negotiating roles, identities, and relationships. Although in this sense things are viewed as "maps," signs representing possible courses of movement and action, things also cease to be map in play and become territory (Bateson "Theory"). At certain points in the play session, both Danny and Crystal lose sight of block-as-wall or block-as-ramp and begin to perceive the physical entities which the blocks are to represent as being real. Through this, their own roles become real, supporting the theory that play, although different from everyday reality, is by no means divorced from it (See, for example, Sacks and Schwartzman; as cited in Goodwin "Serious Side" 315).

Things have meaning here because it is in large part through them that Danny and Crystal negotiate and bargain as they wind through the process of designing and constructing their play frame. A substantial portion of their dialogue involves exchanges over their respective ideas and notions of what these things are to mean, or denote.

This is sometimes reflected in questions, as when Crystal asks Danny:

20 Crystal: What are you making?
21 Something else?

and later, in response to his statement, "I'm going to change this into somethin' neater" (line 113), when she inquires:

114 Crystal: **Not a church anymore**?
115 The prettiest little chu:rch?

Negotiation of things also involves judgment and evaluation, as when Crystal assesses one of Danny's changes in the block structure:

108 Crystal: How come you put it out like that?

109 Danny: ( )

110 Crystal: It looked better how it was.
111 [makes small rhythmic noises]

Things are manipulated through roles and rules, and their transformations require consensus. It is when Danny's and Crystal's interpretations of roles and rules differ that the play frame begins to show significant signs of stress, tension, and potential dissolution. Goodwin and others have identified organization and structure of argument among groups of children and some of the kinds of exchange that emerge in them (Goodwin "Processes," "Aggravated," "Serious Side"; Maynard; Sacks): Are dyadic disputes between mixed sex siblings similarly organized? What pattern do Danny and Crystal exhibit as they seek to construct their playframe? Throughout the following pages I attempt to unravel a segment of the dialogue within this play frame to chart its trajectory. I begin with one of the most intense passages of conflict and negotiation:

35 Danny: [singing] Gonna bring my?
36 [chanting] Can I come in?
37 Can I come in?

38 **I don't wanna come in**.

39 Crystal: No.

40 You can't come in.

The mildness of Danny's chanting in lines 35-37 abruptly changes to a rapidly spoken "I don't wanna come in" in the next line. Line 38 directly contradicts lines 36 and 37 ("Can I come in?" repeated) and is the first indication of denial of his intention to enter (presumably) the garage they have made with blocks. The rush characterizing his utterance of line 38 also suggests that Danny somehow knows he is transgressing rules of some sort. Since these rules have not been previously spelled out in this play session, it would seem that they have been formulated throughout the course of previous play sessions and are implicitly understood by Danny and Crystal.

Crystal prefaces her turn by flatly denying Danny entrance, "No" (line 39), continuing:

40 You can't come in.
41 [raising voice] **YOU CAN'T COME IN**
42 you have to a:sk.

Goodwin suggests that "turn-initial prefaces can be characterized by three different intonation contours, depending upon their semantic content" ("Aggravated Correction" 669). The falling-tone and flatness of Crystal's intonation of "No" emphasizes the finality of her opposition to Danny. In the next three lines of her turn, Crystal states the rules, repeating herself in lines 40 and 41 and raising her voice in line 41 for additional emphasis. Thus, in a single turn, four characteristics of what Goodwin has termed "aggravated disagreement" (657) have emerged: 1) signaling opposition in turn-initial position, thus immediately creating what Halliday and Hassan refer to as "polarity" (178); 2) intonation contour, here a falling contour; 3) repetition; and 4) emphasis, here both in the form of volume ("**YOU CAN'T COME IN,**"line 41), and extended vowel length ("a:sk," line 42). These characteristics can be seen repeatedly throughout subsequent turns.

In addition to these characteristics of aggravated disagreement, changes in strategies prolong the dispute that has begun.

43 Danny: I'm not coming in.

44 Crystal: What are you doing there?

45 Danny: I'm going to do something.
46 I'm not coming in all the way.
47 I'm not coming in all the way.
48 Can I come in?

Danny's initial response is to deny that he is "coming in" (line 43). Crystal, perhaps putting more stock in Danny's actions than in his words, asks with suspicion, "What are you doing there?" (line 44). Danny's next turn consists of four phrases. His first phrase is vague and ambiguous; its evasiveness seems an effort to throw Crystal off his tracks. He then radically revises his previous statement; rather than denying his intended action, he repeats himself and qualifies his intended action, "I'm not coming in all the way" (lines 46 and 47). Having hurriedly sought to avoid potential conflict over his transgression of the rules that seem to be at issue, Danny completes his turn by asking "Can I come in?" (line 48). Although this can be interpreted as a contradiction of his previous turn phrase in which he stated that he was not coming in, it can also be viewed as concession on his part, a recognition that he must negotiate to forestall a brewing dispute.

As we see in successive turns, however, these two questions used as consecutive turn-conclusions have been unsuccessful at stemming disagreement over the rules that are to guide the construction of play. Crystal's next

turn, in which she seeks to correct Danny's attempt to disregard the rules, continues the disagreement.

Crystal again prefaces her turn with "No," followed by another appeal to the rules, "You're not supposed to=" (line 49), although this time an "ummm" before "no" hints at a moment of indecisiveness on her part.

49 Crystal: Ummmm // [firmly] **No**. You're not supposed to=

50 Danny: I just have to drop the truck off.

51 Crystal: O:**KAY**. Then I'll have to **dri:ve my truck**.

52 Danny: Oh, come on
53 Can't **I** drive it i:n?

54 Crystal: [firmly] **No**. You drive my truck.

Just as Crystal says "no," Danny interrupts, informing her, "I just have to drop the truck off' (line 50). There is an element of paradox here. The dispute concerning trucks is clearly within the play frame, but it also embodies a negotiation of just what that frame is, or rather, who governs its construction. The very act of arguing here is the creation of the play frame.

Danny's qualifier "just" is his next strategy to get Crystal to agree to a change in the rules. She resolutely begins her turn with "o:**KAY**" her emphasis on "kay" followed by a sentence beginning with "then" indicates that she has made her decision about how the rules are to be followed. Danny next appeals to her sense of reason, prefacing his request with "Oh, come on (line 52). Crystal's next two turns are prefaced with an aggravated "No." Her refusal to back down continues the series of disagreement turns. The severity of the disagreement escalates beginning with Danny's next turn.

57 Danny: I'm **JUST** driving it in.
58 **OPEN THE DOOR**.
59 I'm going to drive it **whether you like it or not**.

60 Crystal: **What?**

62 Danny: I'm going to go **if you like it or no:t.**

63 Crystal: **WHAT?**

64 Danny: I'm going to go **WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NO:T.**

Danny begins his turn by again seeking to minimize his desired action with the qualifier "just" (line 57). However, in the next phrase of this turn, he changes strategies, using an imperative to command Crystal to "**OPEN THE DOOR**" (line 58). He concludes his turn by threatening Crystal with overriding her expressed sense of the point of negotiation, "whether you like it or not" (lines 61 and 62). It is difficult to determine whether Crystal's next two turns, in which she asks, with a rising intonation, "What?" (lines 60 and 63), stem from a genuine inability to hear Danny's statements or whether they are disagreement prefaces, as discussed by Goodwin ("Aggravated Correction" 668), intended to challenge, irritate, or refute Danny. Whichever the case, here they set up a brief cycle in which to each of Crystal's turns Danny repeats his previous threat, "I'm going to go if you like it or no:t" and in which each turn is uttered more forcefully than the last. What had begun as negotiation and bartering over the design of the play frame now seems to have resulted in a standstill. Bateson remarks that "threat is another phenomenon which resembles play in that actions denote, but are different from, other actions" ("Theory" 42). This might be an instance where we can simultaneously invert "This is play." to "Is this play?" and "This is threat." to "Is this threat?" As both Danny and Crystal become more firmly entrenched in their own perspectives, they become less able to resolve the dispute at hand and slide further out of the play frame in which they began their dialogue.

Crystal's next turn, in which she pleads "Do::n't" (line 65), marks the beginning of a reversal in this disagreement sequence.

65 Crystal: Do::n't.

66 Danny: [impatiently] I'm dropping off your truck.
67 Look what you **DID**.
68 [car noises]

69 Crystal: (**Back**, Danny.)
70 I can fix it **ea**:sily.

71 Danny: [**car noises**]
72 No, you **didn't**.
73 You didn't put that together like that.

74 Crystal: We:lll, then you better git your **truck**.
75 'Cause it doesn't know where to go:.

After impatiently responding "I'm dropping off your truck" (line 66), Danny shifts from his defensive position to an offensive one as he criticizes Crystal, saying, "Look what you did" (line 67). This is the beginning of a shift in the nature of the argument as well; for rather than concerning itself with the rules, it concerns the design of things with which they are playing. Rather than deny anything, Crystal concedes responsibility for the act, stating that she can fix what she has altered.

The disagreement is continued, however, when in Danny's next turn he corrects Crystal's remedial actions. He begins with "No, you didn't" (line 72), repeating part of line 72 in line 73 and elaborating on it for emphasis, "You didn't put that together like that." Crystal's next turn shifts the focus of responsibility to Danny again. She prefaces her turn with "We:ll, then you better. . . ," as if to warn Danny of his own responsibility. She continues her turn by providing an explanation for why he must act, thereby tempering her order, " 'Cause it doesn't know where to go:" (line 75).

This is the beginning of the end of the disagreement sequence.

76 Danny: [car noises]

77 Crystal: It's going to park right here.
78 Okay, git your **tru:ck**.

79 Danny: You have to bring it to me.

Rather than reply directly to Crystal, Danny continues to make car noises, possibly his way of forcing closure upon the disagreement sequence. Crystal expands upon her turn, pointing out where the truck will park before issuing a directive to Danny, "Okay, git your tru:ck" (line 78). His next turn is interesting because it instructs Crystal, "You have to bring it to me" (line 79), without sounding like an imperative from him. He accomplishes this by beginning the phrase with "you have to," a phrase implying obligation on the part of the hearer but, lacking a first-person pronoun, succeeds in sounding as if there is no person directing its use.

Crystal's response, although exasperated, does not contribute to the dispute in the same way as a direct refusal would have done.

80 Crystal: I **JUST** we:nt.
81 You should've **told** me./ /
82 (truck)

83 Danny: I have to walk all the way?
84 That's about ten **mi:les**.

Crystal's turn communicates inconvenience, but not refusal or impossibility, and paves the way for Danny's next turn. Both of these turns serve as a transition back to the sweeter side of the play frame, in which lightness and pretend again reign over excessive seriousness and willfulness. In his turn Danny is able to use his imagination again as he first queries, "I have to walk all the way?" (line 83), followed by an imaginative, non inflammatory estimate of the time it will take him, "That's about ten **mi:les** (line 84). Following a lapse in communication in which Danny and Crystal were unable to distinguish between map and territory, these latter two turns, in which the siblings grossly exaggerate the inconvenience of a pretend distance, manage to reestablish a distinction between map and territory.

Goodwin has identified pejorative person descriptors, such as "nuckelhead" and "egghead," found within disagreements among urban black children ("Processes"). In only one dispute sequence in this play session are pejorative descriptors used. Danny's use of "dumb" and "weird" are not allowed within the limits of the play frame, as Crystal makes clear by immediately appealing to Deborah-this is one of only two instances during the entire play session in which Crystal breaks the play frame by appealing to an outside authority; Danny's description of Crystal's block design as "weird" and "dumb" is unacceptable.

144 Crystal: Mom
145 (1)

146 Deborah: [faintly] Hmm.

147 Crystal: Danny says my umm. how you come out it looks umm,
148 **du:mb.**

Danny immediately defends himself, reporting to Deborah, "I said it looks weirder than // other places" (line 149). When Crystal interrupts him to correct what he is telling Deborah, "He says it looks like that and he says it looks dumb just because I put that **block** // there" (lines 150 and 151), Danny again interrupts her, denying her coverage of the affair and repeating his version of what he did say: **''No, I said it looks wei:rder than other pla:ces**" (line 152 and 153).

Even though this disagreement sequence is ostensibly about the design of their blocks, Crystal feels justified in breaking the play frame when Danny's judgments become pejorative. The threat to the play frame is short-lived, however. Deborah does not continue to interact with Danny and Crystal, and they do not pursue their reportage. Instead, following several

seconds of no verbal exchange at all, Crystal begins singing, absent-mindedly, a short non-sensical song. Danny is also quickly absorbed in play again, devoting the next few seconds to reproducing car noises.

One other extended disagreement sequence concerns block design. Crystal begins this with a negative imperative, telling Danny, "Do:n 't, I don't want you to wreck it" (line 199). Danny's response, "I thought you wanted it how it was," attempts to clarify his understandings of Crystal's design purpose. Crystal prefaces her next three turns with "No":

200 Danny: I thought you wanted it how it was.

201 Crystal: No, I want it like it was be**fo:re**.

202 Danny: I'm doin' that.

203 Crystal: No: Like it **was**.

204 Danny: You couldn't get in that way.

205 Crystal: No, I liked it liked that.
206 Like it **was**.
207 Do:on't.

Although Danny is offering to fix the blocks to suit Crystal's design wishes, he challenges her ideas at the same time, continuing to offer her alternatives:

210 Danny: Or do you want it that just blocked off
211 like that with that there.
212 And you want the ramp up there
213 (3) And that thing back where it was.
214 Do you want it yes or no?
215 **Tell** me now.

216 Crystal: Yes.

217 Danny: Like it was?
218 (1)
219 Crystal: No, like **this**.

220 Danny: Where, but how'd you get in?

221 Crystal: well, you take **this** off
222 And then you put that there
223 And then you take **this** off
224 And you
225 Do:on't.

All of Danny's turns here begin as design questions. When Crystal responds affirmatively to Danny's question, Danny presents an alternative design, impatiently ending his turn with an imperative demanding immediate response from Crystal (line 214). In limiting Crystal's choice of answer to either "yes" or "no," Danny succeeds in retaining power over the block design-in spite of having asked Crystal about her preferences. Although Danny directs multiple questions concerning her preferences to Crystal, ultimately he seems to ignore her wishes. The play session begins to disintegrate as the two again begin to dispute rules:

226 Danny: This is still **mine** Crystal.

227 Crystal: [to Deborah] Danny gave it to me
228 and now he's saying it's his again.

229 Danny: No, I'm not. I never **gave** it to you.
230 Crystal: When I said, Can I have it then you said **ye:s**.

231 Danny: Okay, I **did**, but now I don't **want** you to.
232 And anyway, it's **mine**.

233 Crystal: [laughs] Don't change the rules.
234 You can't change the rules after you have them.
235 [strange noise] Maah.

236 Danny: Crystal, it's **MY** church now. It's still mine, o**KAY**?
237 Crystal: Then where did you ( )

238 (1)

239 Danny: OKAY, oKAY, BUT I WANT IT **BACK** NOW.

240 Crystal: No, you can't have it no:w.

241 I'm gonna give it to Mom.

242 Danny: **OKAY**, o**KAY**, I, I, I can do what **I** want it now.

243 Crystal: ( )

244 Danny: Crysta:l

245 Crystal: ( )

Danny wants complete control of the objects of play, using the possessive "my" or "mine" three times within a span of four turns and "I want" twice within the same span of turns. He is insistent, emphasizing "**MY**" (line 236), and reiterating within the same turn, "It's still mine, o**KAY**?" His repetition of "okay," both in lines 239 and 242, betray his frustration and impatience. Crystal alters herinitial response pattern of objecting by pointing out Danny's contradictions, "When I said, Can I have it then you **said ye:s**" (line 230), and invoking the rules, "Don 't change the rules" (line 233), "You can't change the rules after you have them" (line 234), and finally appealing to their mother. Their dialogue has ceased to have any of the elements of transformation of objects, roles, or design in it; it now exists outside of a play frame.

Goodwin "described ways in which interaction occurring in the midst of a specific play activity, jump rope, is continuous with that outside the play frame" ("Serious Side" 315). The game provides a forum not separate from everyday reality but rather a part of the social order. Blocks, although not as highly patterned an activity as organized jump rope games, is still rule-governed. The disputes and disagreements in the play session examined here are part of Danny and Crystal's social order as they use their blocks and matchboxes to negotiate design of the play environment, rules and roles in their shared play frame. Because they are dealing with pretend, or fabrications, they have the chance to "play the world backwards" (Goffman 1975: 133), making their activity more flexible than reality. But as Goffman also points out, "the world of practice is both simpler and more complex than real-life situations" (1975:65); here the complexity is reflected in the constant arbitration necessary to sustain the play frame.

Gender, Age, and Speaking Style

Beginning in the 1970s, several scholars approached the study of sex and language from various angles. Robin Lakoff presented widely-cited evidence

that more frequent use of tag questions by women than by men may reflect women's uncertainty, tentativeness, and perhaps lack of self-esteem; Deborah Jones's work recognized gossip as a legitimate genre for study, having its own rules of communicative competence (Hymes); and various anthropologists and dialectologist have examined phonological, morphological, and lexical differences between the sexes in numerous cultures (see Coates). Only a few scholars have focused their work on children. Trudgill's work in England found a clear differentiation in pronunciation between six- to ten-year-old girls and boys. Goodwin has found that girls and boys in both same and mixed-sex play groups in Philadelphia use different "directives"—for example, beginning utterances with "let's," indicating cooperation rather than the competition which characterizes boys' play ("Processes,""Aggravated Correction," "Children's Arguing").

None of this work is conclusive; the studies by each of these scholars seem to have multiplied exponentially the questions needing to be asked and reexamined concerning the relationship of gender and language. Some of these questions can be applied to Danny and Crystal's play: Does one or the other employ the interrogative more frequently? What does a comparison of their respective directives ("Aggravated Correction") yield? How does the content of their speech differ, and how are their speaking styles different?

Goodwin's work was with groups of neighborhood children between the ages of four and fourteen and was carried out over a period of 18 months; whereas, the dialogue examined here is dyadic, between siblings, and limited to one short play session. All of these may account for the different results I found in this dialogue.

Although initially examining this dialogue for "directives," or instructions to others, I eventually surmised that they could not be separated from a larger category of what I labeled "challenges." Challenges sometimes resemble Goodwin's directives; as often, they are alternatively direct protests of varying degrees, revisions of previous statements, criticisms, judgments, and corrections to each other-all efforts to shape the playas it was happening. Goodwin has pointed out that power is an important element in conversation ("Processes of Dispute Management"); these challenges in one way or another all reveal an effort on the part of the speaker to either assert or reclaim some power over the direction and design of the play frame.

Danny begins four of his utterances with "no," while Crystal begins ten of hers with "no." Overall, 41 of her utterances can be considered challenges, but only 26 of Danny's. This does not necessarily suggest that Crystal is being more aggressive. It could imply that, since she is younger and/or a girl, she must work harder to continually assert herself in the presence of an older brother who is dominating their play. Her numerous "no's" reflect her

struggle to defend her role as co-architect of the play frame. It would be interesting to see if in a year or two she has developed more sophisticated, subtle and, perhaps, more effective strategies to defend her interests.

Some of Danny's other utterances might be considered what Sacks calls "impression management" ("Button, Button"). These are a tacit form of power management. For example, Danny says "I don't want to come in," "I don't want to come in." In the next line he loses his restraint, saying "Not all the way." The sudden switch indicates that he does indeed want to come in. Beginning his turn by stating he did not want to come in was thus a way of dissuading Crystal of his real intentions and an attempt to manipulate her response.

What other differences are there in Danny and Crystal's language? Coates has observed that girls' and boys' speech differs prosodically, that girls use a greater variety of intonation with more frequent shifts in tones (125). I have identified 19 instances in this dialogue where Crystal draws out and emphasizes her vowels, compared with only six such instances by Danny, one of which was a sound, "bee:p," rather than an actual word. Both Danny and Crystal use rising, falling, and level tones to express themselves; at times softening their voices and at times raising them. Danny makes more noises simulating machinery—police sirens, car engines—than does Crystal.

One theory on the use of questions in conversation states that they have a nurturing role; another posits that they are a sign of subservience. One researcher suggests that questions display greater control over the conversation than statements, since they demand or command certain responses and propel the conversation forward along a certain path (Cameron, et at). In this "strip of discourse," twelve of a total of Crystal's 104 utterances are questions, and thirteen of a total of Danny's 98 utterances are questions.[1] Looking more closely at the questions asked, it becomes evident that the use of many of these questions here is quite different from questions adults sometimes employ to enhance and nurture conversation. Neither are they calculated to propel the conversation forward; this is one indication of how radically different the dialogue in play is from conversation.[2] How, then, do Danny and Crystal use questions? The questions Danny and Crystal ask of each other seem to have layers of messages and motives; all are focused at some level on the actions and intentions of the other.

One of Danny's questions (line 23) is directed to Deborah, and another, "Can I come in?", is repeated three times, sung in lines 36 and 37, and then spoken more forcefully in line 48. Another request, "Can't I drive it i:in?" (line 53), is performed again in line 55 with the phrase "at least" added ("Can I at least drive it in?") to lobby Crystal to comply with his request by suggesting that it is minimal. His next question, "I have to walk all the way?"

(line 83), followed by "That's about ten **mi:les**," is a playful protest. Line 178, a request, "Can I use one of those ramps over there Crystal?", implies Crystal's proprietorship over some of the blocks. (This is one of the few lines in the entire dialogue establishing rules regarding proprietorship in their play.)

The next four questions to some extent solicit information: "Do you like it better how it was Crystal?" (189), "You like it like this?" (208), "Like it was?" (217), "Where, but how'd you get in?" (220). The first three of these solicit Crystal's opinion, with line 208 perhaps questioning her taste. Line 217 questions one of her block designs by suggesting that she has failed to include an entrance. From this perspective, this question might be seen as an example of mitigation, for rather than directly accusing Crystal of doing something wrong, his question format provides her room to explain her design. Danny's last question, "Crystal, it's my church now. It's still mine, o**KAY** (line 236), is really not a question so much as it is a threat or warning to Crystal that he intends to keep the church.

Crystal's first three questions "What are you making?" (20), "something else?" (21), "What are you doing there?" (44), all seek information from Danny about his action. Line 60, "**What**," is repeated in line 63. Line 108, "How come you put it out like that?" is asked partially for information but also possibly as a way of challenging Danny's action. Crystal's next five questions, "**Not a church anymore**?" (114), "The prettiest little church?" (115), "You're putting that in the middle?" (116), "It isn't" (121), "What is it?" (122), are all of a series that mildly protect the construction changes Danny is engaging in (lines 112 and 113) and, at the same time, seem designed to get him to clarify his aims and design. The sense of mild bewilderment in this packet of questions portrays Crystal's relative newness at this process called negotiation. The double diminutive, "prettiest little," reflects an aesthetic sense that contrasts significantly with Danny's utterances. The next question, "Do you need these?" (line 182), is informational, and Crystal's last question, "If you don't want to play with it anymore could I?" (line 198), is a request.

There seems to be little difference in the use Danny and Crystal make of the question format. Almost all of their questions can be seen as veiled challenges or as reconnaissance queries whose purpose is to test the play ground. For the most part their questions are frank, lacking any softening prefaces or turns of phrase that might characterize a conversation by adults. This lack of formality might be seen as a sign of sibling comfort.

One final question concerning Danny's and Crystal's relative styles is the content of their utterances. Danny's world is one of cops, fast cars, and arrests-all typically boys' concerns. Crystal is content responding to this kind of pretend, but at no time does she initiate it. Although she makes noises,

she does not simulate car engines as does Danny. Several of Danny's utterances are threats. Crystal shows every intention of designing and adhering to rules and resists Danny's efforts to trespass them, but she does not make any threats. When she needs to assert her opinion, she follows up her challenge with relatively lengthy explanations for the position she has taken. Danny does not offer the same involved explanations for his position; this may suggest that he is more comfortable feeling dominant than is Crystal.

I have stated above that a large number of Danny's and Crystal's utterances can be construed as attempts to gain power and to influence the trajectory of their play. In spite of the power element in their play, there is an equally strong effort to maintain the play frame; they share an affinity for keeping the reality they are creating alive. Sometimes this is accomplished by sustaining each other's pretend (Crystal's "That boy is going to arrest me), offering choice (Danny's "Do you want it like it was?"), and exaggeration (Danny's "I have to walk all the way?/ That's about ten **MI:LES**."); all of these function as negotiation.

One of the most intriguing possibilities of the ways in which the two negotiate to maintain the play frame is through the use of nonsense sounds and speech. Non-speech sound seems to be a way to back off from conflict when it threatens to jeopardize the play frame. Whereas silence might crack the play frame, nonspeech sound sustains it while channeling conflict away. As mentioned above, both Danny and Crystal engage in "nonsense" singing; these utterances lack the structure of grammar. Words without meaning would appear to carry no message content. Their message, though, may be an important "metamessage," akin to the function of poetic embellishment that McDowell has discussed as being integral to conversation ("Poetic Rites"). That is, the nonsense songs abet in reinvoking the play frame when its edges begin to show signs of strain. They diminish the power struggle inherent in communication via words and sentences.

The limitless number of realities to be built into a play frame also establishes grounds for power struggles and for assertion of one's will. The play frame requires continual shifts in means and message and a willingness to forego resolution. Through their respective styles, Danny and Crystal demonstrate their "communicative competence" by continually renewing their shared play frame.

NOTES

1. This total number of utterances here includes sung passages but not noises, e.g., Danny's expression of car motors and their "nonsense" utterances.

2. Little girls playing tea party or house seem to know exactly how to mimic these nurturing questions in simulated conversations. This raises some interesting questions dealing with reflexivity in children's play conversations.

TRANSCRIPT

1 Crystal: Nuuh uuuh, this is the po**li:ce**.

2 Danny: You should be arrested.

3 Crystal: Nuuh uuuh! [Sort of laughter]
4 (Don't wanna be ( ) arrested.

5 Danny: This is another police but he just pretend
6 **pretends** like he is but now he doesn't have his fast car so
7 he can't **catch** anybody.
8 If he had it he'd go fphhhhheeeeeeeewww

9 Crystal: He'd **chase** 'em.

10 Danny: He'd put his bombs out on the side
11 and go phheeeooowwww
12 and blow their car to smithereens.

13 Crystal: dheww, dhewww dheww dheww dheww dheww dheww dhewwww

14 Danny: They don't park down there.
15 Only the **trucks** do.

16 Crystal: Nooooo, I don't

17 Danny: ( ) make it into in... in**ven**ient. [convenient]

18 Crystal: Can't just umm trucks and cars
19 'cause I don't **like** it back the::re.

20 Crystal: What are you making?
21 Something else?

Danny: [to Deborah, their mother] ( ) playin' a game
You can't talk?
You're not talking.

Deborah: Yeah I am.

Danny: [chanting] 1-2-3
4-5-6,
7-8-9-10
11,12.
12:00 o'clock.

(1)

No, it's not any of those. It's ( )

( ): [Car noises again, softly] Dheww, dhwee

(3)

Danny: [singing] Gonna bring my?
[chanting] Can I come in?
Can I come in?

I don't wanna come in.

Crystal: **No.**
You can't come in.
[raising voice] **YOU CAN'T COME IN**
You have to **a:sk.**

Danny: I'm not coming in.

Crystal: What are you doing there?

Danny: I'm going to do something.
I'm not coming in all the way.
I'm not coming In all the way.
Can I come in?

Crystal: Ummmm//[firmly] **No**. You're not supposed to=

Danny: I just have to drop the truck off.

Crystal: O:**KAY**. Then I'll have to **dri:ve my truck**.

Danny: Oh, come on
Can't **I** drive it i:n?

Crystal: [firmly] **No**. You drive my truck.

Danny: Can I at least drive it in?

Crystal: **No.**

Danny: I'm **JUST** driving it in.
OPEN THE DOOR.
I'm going to drive it **whether you like it or not.**

Crystal: **What?**

(1)

Danny: I'm going to go **if you like it or not.**

Crystal: **WHAT?**

I'm going to go **WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NO:T.**

Crystal: Do::n't.

Danny: [Impatiently] I'm dropping off your **truck.**

Look what you **DID.**
[car noises]

Crystal: (**Back**, Danny)

Crystal: I can fix it **ea**:sily.

Danny: [**car noises**]

No, you **didn't**.
You didn't put that together like that.

Crystal: We:lll, then you better git your **truck**.
'Cause it doesn't know where to go:.

Danny: [car noises]

77 Crystal: It's going to park right here.
78 Okay, git your **tru:ck.**

79 Danny: You have to bring it to me.

80 Crystal: I **JUST** we:nt.
81 You should've **told** me.//
82 (truck)

83 Danny: I have to walk all the way?
84 That's about ten **mi:les**.

85 Crystal: I'm pretending this car drove there.

86 [car noises again- several seconds]

87 Danny: Beep beep bee:p

88 ( ): [various noises; no dialogue]

89 Crystal: I'm waiting until it's **dark** outside.
90 That's when it's ( )

91 (20) [intermittent car noises by Danny]

92 Crystal: One person can't come
93 because it has to walk all the way over there
94 and climb up there and walk over right there
95 and walk right there
96 and walk right there
97 and then walk into the house.
98 And it has to get in **this** car.

99 Danny: Hey, police, I'm going to ar**rest** y:ou.
100 [car noises]

101 Crystal: Boy oh boy, that boy is going to ar**rest** me
102 [mock alarm]
103 (4)
104 I can't even hear you.

105 Danny: I know. ( ) [car sounds]

106 Crystal: It's coming in.
107 (3)

How come you put it out like that?

Danny: ( )

Crystal: It looked better how it was. [makes small rhythmic noises]

Danny: I'm going to change this into whatever you want. I'm going to change this into somethin' neater.

Crystal: **Not a church anymore?**
The prettiest little chu:rch?

Crystal: Go::lly. You're putting that in the middle? Our cars could run into it and then they can't=
[softly] That's right.
Now the cars can't get in the other **side**.

Danny: It's not a church anymore.

Crystal: It isn't
(3) What is it?

Danny: It's just this thing.

Crystal: But it **has** to be a church or **some**thing.

Danny: Okay, it's still a church but it's **dif**ferent.

Crystal: Now the cars can't get over to the other si:de.

Danny: There.
They will be.
(20)

Crystal: [softly] Hey don't leave that block lying there.
( )
(7)

Danny: No.

Crystal: huuh [intake of breath] Yeah!!
(2-3)

Danny: Don't put it on that one. Put idon [it on] the other

one.
Dumb.

Crystal: No, I know ( )
( )
No, I just want to do it.

Danny: Weei:rd.
(2)

Crystal: Mom
(1)

Deborah: [faintly] Hmm.

Crystal: Danny says my umm. how you come out it looks umm, **du:mb**

Danny: I said it looks weirder than // other places.

Crystal: He says it looks like **that** and he says it looks dumb just because I put that **block** // there.

Danny: [forcefully] **No, I said it looks wei:rder than other pla:ces.**

( ): [soft noises]

Crystal: [singing] If you do nothing
then this is what you'll play
Hee haw,
hee haw,
hee haw, hee haw, hee haw
Hee haw,
// hee haw,
hee haw, hee haw, hee haw

Danny: [car noises]

Crystal: No, I don't wanna go up that way because I can't get in
the other side so I'm gonna go a different
Oh! **pooey**, I was gonna go that way and I needed that ramp the:re.
Danny: (Don't ha wa eh

Eh wah be go be dey
Enot ta)

Crystal: [singing, this time in high, almost unintelligible voice, silly, same song as above]
[again, sort of preoccupied. Then same tune, humming, no real words, except for hee haw]
Oh oh hee haw
Oh Loo:k

Danny: Can we use one of those ramps over there Crystal?
(5)

Crystal: No:
Look at the **blocks** that you don't need.
Do you need these?
Oh, I know what I can do with these.

(1)

Danny: I'd really '**preciate** it if you gave me two of 'em. [softly] But I know you won't.

Crystal: Oh, I know.

Danny: I want this to be wrecked.
Do you like it better how it was Crystal?

Crystal: [softly] Yess.

Danny: I can't believe you do.
[car noises, then tune Crystal was singing, briefly, but different with consonants] Vee vaw
vee vaw
vaa vaa vaa
(8)

Crystal: ( )
If you don't want to play with it anymore could I?
Do:n't, I don't want you to wreck it.

Danny: I thought you wanted it how it was.

Crystal: No: I want it like it was **befo:re.**
Danny: I'm doin' that.

Crystal: No: Like it **was.**

Danny: You couldn't get in that way.

Crystal: No, I liked it like that.
Like it **was.**
Do:on't.

Danny: You like it like this?

Crystal: **Yeah!**

Danny: Or do you want it that just blocked off
like that with that there.
And you want the ramp up there
(3) And that thing back where it was.
Do you want it yes or no?
Tell me now.

Crystal: Yes.

Danny: Like it was?
(1)

Crystal: No, like **this.**

Danny: Where, but how'd you get in?

Crystal: Well, you take **this** off
And then you put that there
And then you take **this** off
And you
Do:on't.

Danny: This is still **mine** Crystal.

Crystal: [to Deborah] Danny gave it to me
and now he's saying it's his again.

Danny: No, I'm not. I never **gave** it to you.

Crystal: When I said, Can I have it then you said **ye:s**

Danny: Okay, I **did**, but now I don't **want** you to.
And anyway, it's **mine.**

233 Crystal: [laugh] Don't change the rules.
234 You can't change the rules after you have them.
235 [strange noise] Maah.

236 Danny: Crystal, it's **MY** church now. It's still mine, o**KAY?**

237 Crystal: Then where did you ( )
238 (1)

239 Danny: OKAY, oKAY, BUT I WANT IT **BACK** NOW.

240 Crystal: No, you can't have it no:w.

241 I'm gonna give it to Mom.

242 Danny: O**KAY**, o**KAY**, I, I, I can do what **I** want it now.

243 Crystal: ( )

244 Danny: Crysta:l

245 Crystal: ( )

246 Danny: [to Deborah] Mama::

247 Deborah: It's time to go to bed.

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Spooky Activities and Group Loyalty

Shaari Freed

Between the ages of nine and twelve, I attended many slumber parties. In fact, my three closest friends and I slept over at each other's houses at least twice a month for three years. The parties generally followed the same agenda. We would eat dinner and then play assorted board and card games, and gossip. After the parents went to bed, and we were supposedly winding down for sleep, the gathering took on a decidedly different tone. Invariably, someone would say, "Let's tell ghost stories!" And we would. After we each told at least one story and were properly spooked, we felt ready for the next stage of the after-hours festivities. The time for Ouija board and "light as a feather" had finally arrived.

As an adult, I can remember how bonded I felt to the girls with whom I shared in these activities. I realize that a significant amount of the bonding occurred simply because we spent so much time together. Yet, I remain convinced that a certain component of that connection is directly attributable to our supernatural adventures. I believe that because we participated in activities that felt mysterious, forbidden, foreboding, and (best of all) unique to us, our loyalty to the group increased. I postulate that the state of arousal and fear worked as a *form* of initiation and served as a kind of glue to enhance group cohesiveness. I hypothesize that engaging in spooky activities and believing in the group's tie to the supernatural creates in-group/out-group barriers and enhances group loyalty.

I use the term "spooky activities" to refer to a variety of games and rituals, that children and adolescents engage in, which involve the supernatural. Some of the more well-known ones are calling Bloody Mary (or Mary Whales) 100 times in a mirror, inducing a trance, attempting levitation, and invoking spirits on a Ouija board. The Opies have established that levitation rituals have been documented as early as 1665 (309). In his book *American Children's Folklore*, Bronner gives numerous accounts and examples of spooky activities (143-60). This phenomenon has been established as having continuity through time and space.

There is some difficulty in categorizing these activities as games. Robert Georges has defined games by stating that games have rules, ways of determining a winner, and competition between at least two people (174). Although there are very strict rules for spooky activities, not the least of which is maintaining the belief that the activities involve the spiritual, the activities do not revolve around winning and losing. In her 1984 article about levitation and

trance sessions at slumber parties, Elizabeth Tucker asserts that the word "ritual" best describes what the players participate in. Tucker writes,

> The presence of certain symbolic elements, over a wide span of time and space, creates a sense of ritualistic potency. As in many rituals, the order of events must be faithfully maintained, the tone must be solemn, and the outcome is expected to be something almost miraculous. (126)

From my own recollections and those of my informants, it is clear that Tucker has accurately assessed the situation.

I focused my research on levitation and Ouija board games. Levitation, known to my informants as "Light as a Feather," involves the attempt to lift a person up by having group members place two fingers under the person who is lying on the floor. The group members chant in unison "light as a feather, stiff as a board." If the person is, in fact, lifted, the group attributes this to a successful interaction with the metaphysical.

When participating in a Ouija board session, players sit around a game board (either homemade or store bought) which has the letters of the alphabet as well as the words "yes," "no," and "good-bye" written on it. The players each place one finger on an upside down glass, or some other marker, which the spirit will use to indicate the desired letter. The players usually say a short invocation inviting spirits to join them. They then proceed to ask various questions of the spirit (e.g., "Who will I marry?" "Which boy likes me?").

After an informal poll of my friends and acquaintances, it seemed apparent that many more females than males had participated in slumber parties similar to the ones my friends and I had. I chose three young women and two 12-year-old twin sisters as my informants. I interviewed each woman separately, and the twins together, following the same loose format. Although I wanted to focus on the elements of group cohesion and loyalty, I also wanted to be sure not to bias my subjects or put my own words into their mouths. Therefore, I let each informant tell me about the slumber parties that she had attended, asking questions only for clarification and as memory prompts.

Katie, 24-years-old, still lives in the same suburban home she grew up in. Although she attended school with the same children who were her neighbors, she did not have many social interactions with other children her own age. She considers herself to have been a "tom-boy," and spent much of her time with her older brother. However, between the ages of eight and thirteen, she did attend female slumber parties, mainly on the occasion of a classmate's birthday. She does not recall having particularly close relationships with any of the girls.

At the slumber parties which Katie attended, the girls did not practice any of the discussed rituals. In accordance with my hypothesis, Katie stated: "I knew of other slumber parties where they played Ouija board and stuff. . . but we never did. I always wanted to know what happened at those parties, but no one would ever tell me." I asked her if this bothered her or made her feel left out in any way. She replied: "Yeah, I guess so, it was kind of like they had their own secret club, or something."

Geena, a 22-year-old, grew up on a ranch in San Jose, California. The ranch community housed about 15 families. The children of the community all attended public schools. Geena described her slumber parties the same way I described mine, but with one notable exception, boys were sometimes included. However, four of five girls predominantly attended the parties. Geena could not recall how old she had been when she began playing, but she knew that by at least age thirteen the sleepovers were not popular anymore. When I asked with whom she participated in the rituals, she immediately answered that she only played with people "that were *really* trusted."

After Geena described to me the type of spooky rituals her group played, I asked her the following questions: "Did you ever tell anyone about what you did, or did you keep it to yourselves?" Geena replied, "Well, sometimes, at first we told people at school if it was true, if something really happened. . . but then no one would believe us, so we stopped telling and we just kept it to ourselves. But we would still talk about it to each other, like, do you remember when this happened?"

My third informant was Angela, a 27-year-old woman. Angela moved to the San Fernando Valley, in California, from England when she was six years old. Her parents became involved in the local synagogue, and through them she was introduced to other Jewish children in the neighborhood. Angela recalled that, by age ten, she and five other girls had become quite close. They slept over at each other's houses every weekend and more often during the summer vacations. Angela's group loved telling ghost stories and playing "Light as a Feather" afterwards. Much like Geena, Angela felt bonded to these friends in a very special way. However, according to her, "It wasn't until I got a Ouija board for my birthday that things changed a bit between us. I loved playing and tried to get everyone to play a lot. Pretty much everyone did, except for one girl who was really scared of it. Her mother was really strict about those (i.e. 'brushes with the supernatural') kind of things. But everyone else went along. We all thought that she was a baby, and we talked about it behind her back."

Although in the interview Angela did not directly attribute group loyalty to spooky activities, it is clear that at least one ritual did create an outcast out of one group member. Angela believes that she and her friends simply

outgrew this type of play, but she stated that they did try using the Ouija board in their late teens while experimenting with marijuana.

The 12-year-old twins, Shana and Sara, have attended slumber parties with the same group of five or six girls, on a regular basis, for the past three years. Because they attended a religious day school, it took a while for them to open up about their experiences with spooky party activities. At first, they contended that all they did at the parties was "play board games, watch TV, talk about boys, and gossip, and then we go to sleep." However, as they began to trust that I would not be shocked and, most important, would not "tell on them," they confided in me that they did play other games once the parents had gone to sleep. Shana told me that "mainly we like to play 'light as a feather' which is a game where we lift a girl up by everyone putting two fingers under her." Similar to Tucker's informants, Sara revealed that they set the mood by telling a story about the way in which the girl had died: "We tell first how she died, like maybe she got killed in an accident, or she drowned or something."

Shana and Sara reported that they had played with a Ouija board only once.

> One time last summer, we decided to try doing the Ouija board, so we waited until it was really late and we lit candles and we played. But I got scared and I didn't want to play any more, so we never did it again...If one person gets too scared doing something then we don't do it again.

On the surface, the decision not to engage in a spooky activity seems not to bear relevance to my hypothesis. However, upon further thought, I believe that the girls' "pact" actually does speak to group cohesiveness. Through her acknowledgment of the fear involved, Shana (and by implication, any member who is frightened) was able to express herself and able to entrust her feelings must have increased her loyalty to the group.

In their 1977 article "Interpersonal Awareness in Children," Selman, Jaquette, and Lavin propose a five-stage developmental sequence of awareness of interpersonal issues for children and adolescents. Through standardized tests and interviews of subjects ranging in age from 5 to 22 years old, they were able to establish five ways in which people view concepts such as trust and loyalty in terms of personal, friendship, and peer group standards. Children reach the third stage of development roughly between the age of seven and fourteen. In this stage, the bonds of friendship rest on "bilateral partnerships" and "intimate-mutual sharing" (268). More specifically, "loyalty in groups is seen as an individual contribution to an ongoing communal whole, a kind of all for one loyalty" (269).

Geena's declaration of the way she felt about her slumber party friends fits this stage of Selman, Jaquette, and Lavin's model: "We were our own

group, we felt bonded and close, we felt safe with each other.... I still see those people when I go home." Angela's accounts also fit this model in that the group viewed the one friend who refused to participate or share in the activities of the communal whole as slightly disloyal.

An aspect of the ritual that was extremely important to my group, as well as to Angela's and Geena's groups, was maintaining belief-or at least the illusion of belief. In *Organizational Cultures,* Thomas Dandridge has shown that among working adults there is certain company lore that exists in many companies. The majority of the employees know the legend and will share it with outsiders or with each other. However, when pressed, they will admit that they don't really believe the myth, but that they maintain it in order to increase company cohesion.

I believe the same type of group pressure is at work in groups participating in spooky activities. I know that I, and I assume my friends, harbored some doubt as to whether we were making contact with the supernatural or not. However, I remember feeling tacit pressure not to express my qualms. Perhaps questioning would have broken the spell. (There is some evidence though, that when people's beliefs are called into question, they tend to strengthen their beliefs [Bern], but I suppose as children we couldn't have known that.) Geena's comments best illustrated the intense need to believe; ten years later she is still seeking confirmation that she and her friend did indeed interact with the metaphysical:

> Sometimes we played and sometimes I felt like I would have to push [the Ouija board marker] for it to work but sometimes I wouldn't push it and I know my friend didn't push it and no one else was and it would move—so sometimes it was real. And one time in "Light as a Feather" we did it with [the girl] sitting in a chair and it raised to the ceiling, and none of us could have done it. Do you think it was true?

I was quite startled that Geena actually asked me if I thought that she was relating a real event to me or possible that the event was a true venture into the supernatural.

Angela related the same need to believe as a participant. After I asked her if she had felt that the events were truly spirit based, she replied that when she was younger she believed that they were. I found evidence of her younger self's belief in the way her adult self tried desperately to prove that there was a logical explanation for the events. Angela launched into a full discourse on the ways in which the Ouija board marker could have been manipulated and the fact the "Light as a Feather" had to work-due to the distribution of the liftee's weight. She ended her sermon with, "See, so it couldn't have been real!" Oddly enough, Katie, who while she was younger did not have enough

information about spooky activities to believe them, falls between Geena and Angela on the continuum of belief and disbelief-she says she thinks the events might be real.

Research studies of initiations into groups provide the final point of support for my hypothesis. Research in social psychology has shown that the more severe an initiation a person undergoes, the more loyal he/she feels to the group into which he/she has been initiated. That is, the more arousal he/she feels, the more the group will be valued (Aronson and Mills). Cognitive Dissonance theory accounts for this by saying that the initiate resolves the feelings of arousal by thinking, "If I went through all that, I must really want to be part of this group."

I think this influence can be seen at work in the rituals. By all accounts, the participants feel fear and arousal. In fact, I remember being petrified at times. It seems plausible that spooky rituals mirror initiation rites the first few times they are engaged in. The children comply with the rules of the group and participate in activities that they would probably not participate in on their own. The cognition "if I am going through all this, I must really want to be part of this group" certainly seems apropos here. Simon Bronner offers support for this idea: "As children's culture stresses the goal of belonging and maturation, we find that belief and custom enter into several initiations. Children often seek the distinction of being part of an exclusive group, and submit to initiation customs which call upon them to show their maturity, courage, and self-control among the dangers and eerie sights of the dark" (162).

Group processes in adults have been studied at length. Studies that have focused on in-group/out-group categorization have shown that the feeling of loyalty to one's own group can be aroused even in the most artificial groups. It does not, therefore, seem farfetched that children who share intense experiences should also feel intense loyalty to their in-group. We can all instantly evoke superficial groups we belong to towards which we feel some loyalty; how much more intense are these feelings if we actually share memories and, more importantly, experiences with members of the group? It is a function of in-group/out-group categorization that the more experiences members have of and with each other, the stronger the ties that bind them become. An emotional ritual repeated and shared only with a trusted few can't help but serve to increase group cohesion.

Elizabeth Tucker has accounted for trance and levitation rituals by equating them with the experience of control in an uncertain world (133). I do not disagree with Tucker's explanation. However, I do believe that the state of arousal involved in these rituals needs to be more carefully examined. I think that further research might bear out the notion that children, as well

as adults, seek out arousal. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised to find that group arousal serves the adaptive purpose of bolstering group cohesion.

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Preschool Protolore

Laurie McGonnagill

The folklore of preschool age children exists in a germinal form. Because preschoolers are generally non-literate and their thinking abilities are largely undeveloped, and because their social skills are just beginning to be acquired, their play and game lore is rudimentary.[1] It could be called "protolore" in the same way that riddles composed and performed by young children are called "preriddles."[2] Rather than follow specific actions or prescribed word formulae, the preschooler most often invents extemporaneously within a given, peer-understood structure. Thus, the group game I record in which the "family" –two or more children—is pursued by the "bear"—one child—demonstrates the structure, elements, and excitement of hide and seek and chase even though no specific rules or incantations accompany the game. Likewise, verbal play, in which a word or words are spoken by a child and picked up and played upon by the others who rhyme or repeat the original word(s) in a chant-like way, is structured and systematic, though no prescribed or learned rhyme or chant is spoken. I will describe and analyze three examples of preschool protolore. My material was gathered from observation of children enrolled in my preschool in Auburn, California.

Mary and Herbert Knapp point out that childlore emerges when adult supervision and organization of the child's time cease. In his article, "Children's Folklore," Jay Mechling notes the rise of day care facilities and the early age at which many children are confronted with a social situation. He states, "In these formal institutions, the children become increasingly adept at creating folk cultures separate from and resistant to the adults' definition of the organization's culture" (95). This corresponds to my observations. Amidst the organized preschool day and my agenda, lore arises during the less structured times: outdoor and indoor free play, mealtimes, transition times between activities. Childlore takes over as soon as there is no immediate adult direction. Adult intervention generally halts or inhibits the playing out of lore, but adult participation usually does not.

There is no overt teaching of protolore. The play is initiated by the children who know it; those unfamiliar with the lore learn by observing those who know and then by imitating them. It is remarkable how spontaneous the learning and performance of lore is. It is as though the children inherently understand their culture; those children exposed to a game for the first time become involved almost immediately. They may even begin playing before they have grasped the game intent and so learn by doing.

The preschool children involved in the creation and performance of the lore presented in this paper range in age from two and a half to five years old. The older ones generally, but not always, instigate the play. Once a game has been played, any child may, at a future time, urge the others to recreate it.

Fifteen children attend the preschool, but they come on different days, two or three times a week. On anyone day seven are present: usually four girls and three boys. The children know each other well; about one fourth have been acquainted through the preschool for two or more years. Due to the small number of children and the presence of only one adult, the group resembles a family, complete with close bonding and occasional squabbles.

The parents of the children are white with middle- to upper- middle-class incomes. All fathers work full time. Nine mothers are homemakers, and six mothers work part-time. Out of fifteen children, three have no siblings and two have more than one sibling. The majority have one brother or sister. Because the preschool is held four hours a day, as opposed to an all-day day care center, parents generally spend more time with their offspring than two full-time working parents would. These parents, particularly the mothers, are very interested in their children's education, and communication between parent and preschool teacher is strong.

The attempt to classify children's games and lore has met with frustration. Paul G. Brewster, editor of *Children's Games and Rhymes* asserts, "It is impossible to make the divisions mutually exclusive" (33). His own system of classification divides games into eighteen divisions, such as, ball games, hiding games, counting-out rhymes, and tongue-twisters. The Knapps group different childlore genres by chapter in their book, but do not introduce classification. Jean Piaget, the child psychologist, offers the division proposed by Stem of grouping games into two large classes: individual and social (108). Though there may be overlap even between these two, the three examples of childlore I have investigated fit predominantly into the social category. I recognize different lore genres and have chosen examples from fantasy: "Scary Bear;" imitation: "Sandbox Birthday;" and verbal lore: "Popcorn Word Play."

Scary Bear. This is a favorite and an exciting game. It is an outdoor activity requiring lots of space to run and places to hide and the permission to be very noisy. One child calls out, "Who will be the bear?" or "Jackie, will you be the bear?"[3] The position of bear is a bit onerous, but two children lately have readily agreed to be 'it.' One, a three and a half year old boy, is popular with the others; the other child, a two and three quarters year old headstrong girl, is the class scapegoat and not as well liked. The children who constitute the "family," usually two to five of them, dash off and locate their home: the low branched climbing tree, the playhouse, or the play boat. They each claim

a position in the family: "I'm the mother," "I'll be the teenager." Occasionally, older and more assertive children assign roles to a younger or less assertive child: "You be the bunny."

The family sets up housekeeping, but they are on constant guard against attacks by the bear. Meanwhile, the bear lurks behind bushes or trees getting ready to rush in and frighten the family. The bear moves in growling and flailing its arms; the family members scream and make hasty plans to flee their dwelling for a safer one. They quickly gather their possessions—bowls, utensils, bedding—and race out of their home, the bear in hot pursuit. Screaming and squealing they run and dodge; excitement rises to a keen pitch. Somehow they elude the bear and reestablish their household in a new location. The bear, who has menaced them but never quite caught them, retreats to catch its breath. Sometimes this is the end of the game; the children may drift into another activity. Or, the family may settle into their new home and play house for a while. The bear, temporarily tamed or changed into something docile, may even reside with the family. After a few minutes of domestic quietude, the exciting threat and chase begins anew.

Sandbox Birthday. Several children migrate to the sandbox. The children almost always use the sandbox for baking and food preparation activities; rarely are homes built or roads constructed. Anywhere from one to seven children may be involved in making, baking, and celebrating a birthday. Sometimes it is a solitary effort; sometimes a cooperative venture. Usually two children "make the cake." They assemble equipment: a wooden bowl, spoons, leaves and grasses, flowers. First, the sand is spooned into a bowl. Then, numerous trips to the water fountain ensure a "batter" of the right consistency. One child may stir while another adds ingredients. Forays into the garden provide additions: a bit of dirt may become cinnamon, fallen olives are blueberries, and leaves and flowers serve as decorations.

The children are very busy and take turns stirring and seeking for ingredients. Some bake their cakes by placing the bowl under a bush or on a log which, for their purposes, are ovens; occasionally, they may transport the cake across the yard to the playhouse where there is a toy stove and oven. The next step is decorating the cake. This is elaborate: leaves, flowers, and candles (thin sticks) are arranged carefully. Secrecy and surprise are important elements in this play. Bakers hope the birthday child (just pretend) is unaware that the preparations are made in her/his honor. If the birthday person is aware of the pending celebration, s/he may be eager to eat the cake; the bakers must then admonish, "Not yet, we're not done!" and "Don't look!" Finally, the cake, candles lit, is ready to be presented. The bakers, holding the cake bowl with both hands, advance singing "Happy Birthday" to the honored child, who, depending on her/his degree of manner refinement, may stare at the

presenters and make no move to accept the cake, or, smiling graciously, accept the cake and take pretend bites. That done, the cake is unceremoniously dumped in the sandbox and another one begun or the play abandoned.

A variation on this game is the poison cake. Several children prepare their concoction surreptitiously, whispering, gesticulating with restraint, and glancing secretly at their target person. The cake is presented as a genuine love offering. After it is "tasted" by the recipient, the bakers gleefully call out, "You're dead!" or "You ate poison!" Poison cake making is considered a high joke and is not usually a reflection of interpersonal relations.

Popcorn Word Play. Preschool children love to play and experiment with sounds and words. Joy in sound production generates many verbal games. Preschoolers delight in nursery rhymes and nonsense syllables. One and two word rhymes and chants are particularly prized. So a child might say to another, "You're a silly billy," to be countered by the other with, "Well, you're a silly jilly." Back and forth they will go, each trying to best the other and making up new sound combinations as they go. The game I focus on has a very specific context: snack time when popcorn is on the menu. Each child has his/her own bowl of popcorn. Out of the general chatter, one will pick up a piece of popcorn and announce it: "a mouse" or "a snowflake," for instance. That signals the start of the game. Each child, in turn, holds up a kernel and announces it, "a jelly bean." The responses get sillier as the game progresses, "a bee," "a flea." Humor is important; laughter greets most responses.

The pronouncement is always the same: emphasis on the article "a"—it is drawn out-followed by a clipped and rapidly spoken noun. Nonsense syllables or new words may be introduced. Recently one five year old girl repeatedly interjected the word, "maniac." The game may end because the childrens' attention is distracted or occasionally by a child requesting that it stop, "That's enough!" or "It's too noisy!"

I have looked at the three examples of protolore in terms of contextual analysis in the first part of the paper. Now I will apply three other methods of analysis, functional, structural (the diachronic structure has been given; I will focus on binary oppositions of the synchronic structure), and psychoanalytic, to the lore. I will consider "Scary Bear" in terms of all three methods and "Sandbox Birthday" and "Popcorn Word Play" in functional terms.

"Scary Bear" functions as a release of physical energy—there is a lot of vigorous activity and running involved—and as a stimulus for excitement, a playing out of the fears and anxieties of childhood in a safe way. Fear of the "boogey man" and monsters is mediated in this game. It also allows for group dislike of a particular child to be expressed in a socially acceptable way (when an unpopular child is encouraged by the group to be the bear). It allows the children in the family to experience familial solidarity and play act traditional roles (mother, father, sister, brother).

"Scary Bear" reveals several binary oppositions: pursued and pursuer, family and outsider, humans and animal, inside (the family in the house) and outside (the bear is not confined), group and individual, defenders and offender, hidden and found. The reinforcement of these oppositions throughout the game creates a mighty tension between the two, family and bear. However, children are conscious that the game is just pretend; roles are assumed, and they may be changed. This fluidity allows the tension to be relieved. Children imitate and play out the oppositions and tensions they perceive in the adult world and those they experience in their own.

Looking at this game psychoanalytically reveals several possible interpretations. The bear could symbolize the beastly untamed nature of humankind which is out to frighten and devour the civilized nature. Or, the game could represent the vulnerability of children at the mercy of the adult world. Huddling for safety inside the house can be likened to the security of the womb. Also, the group represents security and conformity; the bear, the loneliness of the individual.

The excitement engendered by the bear's pursuit of the family seems to be the main reason for the game. As soon as the children have secured a person to play the bear, they become big –eyed and keyed up. This mounts as the play progresses. Squeals become screams; running from the bear escalates into wild flight. The excitement reaches a frenzied peak as the bear either nearly succeeds in capturing a family member or fails as the family eludes it. Thus, I see the overall function of this lore as an exciting and nonthreatening way of mediating children's fears of the "boogey man," the adult world, the unknown.

"Sandbox Birthday" is a hands on, direct imitation of making a cake and celebrating a birthday. The play allows the children to be physically creative and to get dirty. The cake making and decorating culminate in the presentation of the cake to the honored person. Often, who this will be is unknown until the singing of "Happy Birthday" discloses the name. Thus, there is an element of surprise: the bakers must keep a secret and the recipient kept in anticipation. Mechling identifies secrecy as an "antithetical device" employed by children in their playas a way to assert power over another (102).

This game reveals children's readiness to accept and imitate social customs. It allows them to play "grownup" and still get messy. It gives them an opportunity to honor a particular child. The poison cake variation enables them to turn the tables and playa trick. Secrecy and surprise give the baker children the feeling of being in control and having the upper hand. In the real world, of course, adults wield the power; "Sandbox Birthday" is a way through play that the child can be in charge. In addition, the poison cake play may mediate real anxieties of poisoned food. Children are at risk when they

ingest candy gathered trick or treating at Halloween. Parents convey these anxieties to their children, and children release them through play such as this.

Humor and word experimentation appear to be the function of "Popcorn Word Play." Each succeeding response is sillier, and the children laugh harder. It is a social and cooperative game. Throughout, children take turns giving their responses (until the chaotic end when several speak at once), and they build on the previous response, "a goat," "a sheep," or "a comb," "a gnome." Children listen and are challenged by the nature of the game to display skill in matching or rhyming the antecedent response. The play encourages children to try out new words—maniac, for example—and taboo words—"poop" and "pee" occasionally pop up as a response rhyme. Preschoolers are struggling with sound, word, and sentence formation. This game gives them a fun way to tryout new or forbidden sounds and words. It provides children an opportunity to be creative with language, practice social skills, and have a good laugh.

Although there is no dearth of collections and analyses of folklore of children age five years and up, material pertaining to the preschool child is more likely to be found, and with a different emphasis, in child development or child psychology literature. Child developmentalist Frances Markey concludes in her 1935 study (reprinted 1976) *Imaginative Behavior of Preschool Children* that "many aspects of the development of learning and understanding may be observed in connection with the imaginative behavior [of] some expressions of a child's social adjustments and his techniques for dealing with others" (130-31). These are broad though valid statements when applied to possible interpretations of protolore.

The Knapps cite lore that enables a child to feel a sense of power and to cope with the unknown. Though many lore items the Knapps describe are not applicable to preschoolers—the Knapps deal primarily with lore of children ranging in age from five years and up-some genres overlap, for example, what they call, "coping with the unknown." The Knapps state, "being scared—but not really—is a feeling children love.... Children want to explore their deep-seated fears of ... the worst things they can imagine" (242-44). For older children this may be accomplished by telling spooky stories; for the preshcool age, it may be by playing a game such as "Scary Bear."

As I suspected, direct questioning of the preschool children did not disclose revelations as to their motivations for playing out the lore. Typical responses to my question of "Why do you play this game?" were, "Just because," or, "'cause it's fun." When I asked several children who were baking in the sandbox why they made birthday cakes one snorted and replied, "You don't have a brain!" thus admonishing me for asking such a silly question.

In studying preschool lore, it has become clear to me that children satisfy many of their needs through their own inventive play: the need for release of physical energy, the need for excitement, for feeling safe; the need to imitate and tryout what grownups do; the need to mediate anxiety; the need to express sounds and play with language; the need to laugh, have a good time and bond with other children. Childlore effectively mediates these requirements. It provides children an oblique, playful, and imaginative approach for dealing with their physical, psychological, and social needs and issues-an approach which may surprise, delight, and humble adults working in preschool education.

NOTES

1. I will use the terms "lore," "game," and "play" interchangeably with these distinctions. Lore refers to the overall system of child-initiated imaginative play activity. Game connotes a specific child-initiated imaginative play activity. Play refers to the process or performance of the play activity.

2. Jay Mechling suggested the term "protolore" to me.

3. The "bear" has been in vogue for several months. Variants are the "shark," "ghost," "monster," and so on. The antagonist is either an animal or a supernatural being.

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The Nature Lore of Children: Functions and Variations

Laura Watson

> Passwords, and signs, and sayings which have power and effect and plants you carry in your pocket, and verses you repeat, and dodges and tricks you practice, all simple enough when you know them, but they've got to be known if you're small, or you'll find yourself in trouble.
>
> Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*

When most adults reflect on their childhood, they remember beliefs, games, and customs which they held in common with other children of their own age and culture. Time and experience have given these adults the perspective from which to recognize these as child-lore, but as children, they took them for granted as "the facts of life." Sharing beliefs and customs is an important part of childhood, as children see the world as full of mysteries and ever-changing wonder: "With much that is out of children's sight in their world, beliefs and customs provide them with awareness, and serve as a guide to some of their experience" (Bronner 162-63).

Much of child-lore involves nature, in particular the components of nature with which children can have direct contact: small animals, insects, plants, and stones. One reason for this is that beliefs shared among children develop only when they are together, and this occurs most frequently outside—while playing or walking to school (Opie, *Lore and Language* 209). Another explanation for the prominence of nature lore in children's culture is that the mysteries of nature provoke curiosity, something that children have in abundance. Children are very eager to have explained to them why something is a certain way, and any explanation will often do, whether it is scientific or superstitious (Thiselton-Dyer 233). The comforting nature of a simple ritual or charm is of great value during childhood, which "is a time of testing the real and unreal or finding one's place between the realms of nature and society and between the natural and the supernatural. Children call upon a host of beliefs and customs to make their way through an uncertain world" (Bronner 161).

This article will explore the variations on certain customs and beliefs within several geographical areas. There will also be discussion of the functions of children's naturelore and an attempt to discover which seems to be the most important (or the most often mentioned in the material available on the subject). These observations may not, however, be completely representative of the importance children actually place on each function, as all of the informa-

tion used was complied by adults. Also, the initial intention was to compare children of different cultures and time periods in their use of nature customs. However, not surprisingly, the bulk of available information concerns twentieth-century British and American children. Most of the literature about the folklore of other cultures and times included information about children; however, it mainly described adults' customs and beliefs regarding children—not children's own. Therefore, the variations on customs which will be discussed here will be largely confined to contemporary, Western children. In order to broaden the comparison, I will also include information from personal sources; these will be followed by my last name in parentheses.

One overwhelmingly common aspect of the nature lore of children is the naming of objects and actions. It seems, particularly in Britain, children have a need to develop their own identification system, if not their own language. Possibly, the official, adult names for things are too difficult to pronounce, too dull, or simply not sensory and descriptive enough for children's tastes.

Often the name given, by children, to plants, relates in some way to the way that children use those plants. For example, British children call the burrs of goose-grass, which are used as a love-charm, "sweethearts" (Opie, *Lore and Language* 328) and the butter-bur, which is used as a trumpet, a "bog-horn" (Thiselton-Dyer 233). In Yorkshire, the water-scrophularia is called "fiddle wood" because children use it as a fiddle (Thiselton-Dyer 235). Horse chestnuts have been given many names, most originating from the objective of the game that is played with them—"oblionker," in Worcestershire (Thiselton-Dyer 238); "conker" in Langholm (Milberg 152); "cheggies" in Grimsby; "hong-congs" in Worcester; "obbley-onkers" in Welshpool and Shrewsbury; "cobs" (Opie, *Children's Games* 228). In the Eastern Border district, the Shepherd's Purse plant is called "mother's heart" because of a game with it involving breaking one's mother's heart (Thiselton-Dyer 239). American children call water bugs "Lucky Bugs" because catching one brings luck (Johnson 59).

Names are also often given in response to the appearance or taste of a particular plant. For example, in the north of England, children call cardamine pratenses (also known as ladies-smock) "cuckoo-spit" because of the saliva-like patch of froth on its flower stem (Thiselton-Dyer 234), and in Scotland, devil's bit is known as "curl-doddy" because its flowers look like a boy's curly hair (Thiselton- Dyer 236). In my childhood, we called clover flowers "honeysuckle" because the inside ends of their petals had a sweet taste when we sucked on them. In the north of England, the fruits of the mallow are called "cheeses" because of their tastes (Thiselton-Dyer 234), and heath-peas are known as "liquory knots" because they taste like licorice when they are dried (ThiseltonDyer 238).

Many other names seem to have been chosen simply for the enjoyment that comes from saying them. For example, names of insects are often nonsense words which are fun to say and vary from region to region. As of around 1900, North American children called ants "Dooley-bugs" in Indiana, "Doodles" in the Southern States, and "Doodle-bugs" in Louisiana (Bergen 56). Daddy-long-legs spiders were called "Grandfather gray" and "Grandfather graybeard" in New York, "Granddaddy" in Dorchester, Ontario (Bergen 58), and "Grandpa long legs" in New England (Johnson 25). One example of a children's name that is a more colourful interpretation of the adult occurs in Buckinghamshire where children call the deadly nightshade "naughtyman' s cherry" (Thiselton-Dyer 234).

Along with descriptive names, another facet of children's nature lore which is mentioned more frequently than any other is superstition. Here, superstition is intended to include beliefs about good and bad luck, love charms, time-telling, and other types of divination. These supernatural belief systems seem to have been embraced by children from many cultures, throughout at least the last century. The importance of superstition to children can be explained, in part, by their attraction to the magical and mysterious elements of life (Opie, *Lore and Language* 220). Also, questions about the future attract the curiosity of children. From their young perspective, the rest of their lives must seem to be a massive chunk of time, with endless possibilities-both long term (who will they marry?) and short (Bronner 161). "When a child steps out of his home to go to school. . . he is on his own, and looking after himself. The day ahead looms large and endless in front of him, and his eyes are wide open for the prognostics which will tell him his fortune" (Opie, *Lore and Language* 213). Children's fascination with superstitions is only natural, as humans, in general, have superstitions, even if we sometimes claim to not believe in them. Beliefs also give children a shared history and a sense of the continuity of life (Knapp 237), although they aren't aware of the tradition behind superstitions and usually see them as novel bits of wisdom learned from a more knowledgeable peer: "it is something just learnt, and often excitingly full of possibility for his immediate welfare" (Opie, *Lore and Language* 213).

Although their own beliefs are undeniably important to children, Iona and Peter Opie point out that different charms and rites are observed on different levels. Some are practiced for fun and to belong. Some are taken lightly, but are still practiced due to a nagging feeling that there just might be some truth to them. Others are honestly believed in, not even recognized as superstitions, because children "appear to have an innate awareness that there is more to the ordering of fate than appears on the surface." The beliefs which are faithfully followed by children seem to follow patterns of significant common character-

istics, for example, anticipating events and seeing the backs of objects are usually negative omens (Opie, *Lore and Language* 210).

When children are young, the beliefs of their peers are generally considered more compelling than those of their elders. However, this changes in the early teens, as superstitions passed down through the family become much more dominant (Opie, *Lore and Language* 209).

The most elemental form of superstition is luck, and its tendency to be good or bad. It is a very simple concept, and good and bad omens are mentioned frequently in collections of children's nature-lore. Sometimes good luck is promised by an event which one would expect to be negative. For example, British children consider it good luck to step on horse or dog droppings, to be defecated on by birds, or to find a spider on their clothes (Opie, *Lore and Language* 213-19). This is perhaps an optimistic effort to "make the best of a bad situation" or an indication of a child's desire to act contrary to adults.

Carrying lucky objects is another popular method of ensuring good fortune. These range from stones (round ones and those with holes in them) in England (Opie, *Lore and Language* 226) to four-leaf clovers almost anywhere. (Finding a four-leaf clover is mentioned as lucky in many sources about childhood as well as adult superstitions; therefore, it cannot be designated solely as a children's belief.)

Ladybugs are widely considered as good luck omens, although the details of the charm vary. Children from Market Rasen hold them in their hands on the way to school and chant, "Ladybird, ladybird, flyaway home/ Your house is on fire, your children are gone/ Except the little one under a stone/ Ladybird, ladybird, flyaway home" (Opie, *Lore and Language* 217). A New York variation on this rhyme is, "Ladybug, ladybug, flyaway home/ Your house is on fire and your children all gone/ All but one, and her name is Ann/ And she crept under the pudding pan" (Bergen 60). Another American children's charm involves punching someone upon seeing a ladybug to ensure good luck (Bronner 164).

The luck potential of spiders depends on one's treatment of them, according to British children. Small red spiders, known as "money spiders," are lucky when thrown over the shoulder, but someone who kills one will meet with terrible fortune: "If you want to live and thrive/ Let a spider run alive" (Opie, *Lore and Language* 219-20).

Quite often, simply finding or carrying some natural object is not adequate to ensure good luck. An additional ritual also contributes to the charm. For example, children in Radnorshire say that one must stick a found black feather in the ground before it means good luck (Opie, *Lore and Language* 224). When Yorkshire children find a green stick they spit on it and throw it over their left shoulder. Only then will it supply luck.

Bad luck charms seem to be somewhat less arbitrary. They often have an explanation behind them. Children consider the "cuckoopspit" unlucky because it has been spit on by a cuckoo (Thiselton-Dyer 234). In Birmingham and Hanover, the pickfolly is considered unlucky due to the negative nature of a game played with it (which will be described later). Argentinian children have a parallel to this belief in the common tropical weed, Ageratum conzoides (Thiselton-Dyer 239-40).

Methods of divination, or predicting the future, are usually more complicated than simple good/bad luck superstitions. Often the information children want to determine involves the immediate future. For example, various actions are believed to cause rain. In Swansea, children say that if one kills a beetle, it will rain. However, reversal is possible: "Pick it up and bury it, the sun will shine again." In Norwich, according to a teacher, "every insect akin to a wood-loose is hailed as a 'rain beetle' and one is warned not to ill it" (Opie, *Lore and Language* 213). In many places, it is a common belief that killing a spider will bring rain. This, however, may be originally an adult superstition.

Wondering whether or not their mother wants them to come home leads American children to blow three times on a dandelion gone to seed. If some seeds remain, they must return home immediately (Bergen 103). Dandelions are used in this way in order to divine other information. For instance, to tell the time, children in New England blow three times on a seeded dandelion, and the number of seeds remaining indicate the hour (Johnson 32). Some American girls blow on a dandelion to determine how many children they will have (Bronner 165).

The subject of death, a great mystery to many children, affects some future-oriented superstitions. Barnsley children believe that if a black beetle crawls on your shoe, one of your friends will die (Opie, *Lore and Language* 213). Another morbid belief comes from Boston children: If you see a dead mouse, spit on it three times, or your dinner will take on its flavour (Bergen 17).

Children also attempt to divine the far future. Girls take a particular interest in learning the identity of their future husbands. In Massachusetts, if a girl puts a piece of southernwood down the back of her top she will marry the first boy she meets. Variations on this theme include putting the southernwood in her shoe in Woburn, MA, or under her pillow in Boston, MA (Bergen 104). Canadian and American girls twist the stem of an apple while reciting the alphabet. The letter they are on when the stem comes off is the initial of the boy they will marry. Another apple charm from the United States involves peeling an apple. If the peel comes off in one piece and a girl throws it over her shoulder, it will fall in the shape of her future husband's initial. In the United States, if it is raining while the sun is shining, a girl pick up a rock and looks under it to find out the color of her future husband's hair (Bronner 164-65).

Not all predictions about the future involve marriage. Pick-folly (mentioned earlier) is used by Northamptonshire children to determine their general fate. While picking off leaves, they recite, "Rich man, poor man, beggar-man, thief," and the word they are at when the last leaf is plucked is what they will become (Thiselton-Dyer 239). If a girl in Alabama eats nine green persimmons, she will eventually turn into a boy (Bergen 120). New England children believe that the color of the first butterfly a girl sees in spring is the color she will wear the most in the coming year (Johnson 106). A very common method of answering almost any question involves plucking the petals from a daisy. Each petal alternatively signifies a negative or affirmative response, and the last petal plucked gives the final answer. These rituals for predicting the future must be very comforting to children. Since so much about their lives is out of their control, having a hand in pre-determination would provide a feeling of power.

A form of superstition most common among older children (and especially among girls) is the love charm. Possibly, the confusion and overwhelming nature of pre-teen relationships with members of the opposite sex are brought into clearer focus when a child is able to let fate make some of his or her decisions.

Girls in Alton and Hampshire, England, believe that they are in love if they walk in a field and the "sweethearts" (mentioned earlier) stick to their clothes. The number of "sweethearts" denotes the number of boys the girl is in love with (Opie, *Lore and Language* 238). Hudson River girls in the nineteenth century would say, "Wear a piece of golden-rod and you will see your love before tomorrow" (Skeel 148). Boys in New England also practice a love charm. Before sticking two apple seeds on his eyelids, he has his friend give them names of girls they know. Then the boy blinks as fast as he can, and the name of the seed which stays on the longest is the name of the girl he loves most (Johnson 83).

The preceding superstitious beliefs and customs make up the bulk of the information found on the subject of children's nature-lore; therefore, it seems that superstition is the most commonly practiced aspect. There were several other functions researched, and they will now be discussed, from the most often mentioned to the least.

Children, being very resourceful people, quite often devise toys and games from those elements of nature to which they have access. The invention of nature toys and games may have come about because certain children need objects with particular qualities for playing a favorite similar game. Alternatively, the inspiration may come from the natural object itself; it has characteristics which naturally suggest a particular sort of use in play.

Sometimes, a plant is used as a musical instrument because a child has discovered that it can be manipulated to make a certain sound. For instance, the hollow stalks of Bog-horns (mentioned earlier) can be played as a horn or trumpet (Thiselton-Dyer 233). In the south of Scotland, a common reedgrass called "double" is used, partly decayed, by children to "make a sort of musical instrument, similar to the oaten pipes of the ancients" (Thiselton-Dyer 235). Fiddle-wood stems (mentioned earlier) are stripped of their leaves by Yorkshire children and scraped across each other to make a fiddle-like squeaking noise (Thiselton-Dyer 235). When I was a child, we would place thick blades of grass lengthwise between our thumbs, cup our hands together, and blow through the small opening to produce an abrasive, honking sound. The ability to play these "instruments" can be a valued social skill.

One popular nature-oriented game which has been played in many locations, over centuries, is "conkers" (called "chestnuts" in the United States). The birth of this game came after the arrival of the first chestnut tree in England in the early seventeenth century. However, a similar game was played in the fifteenth century with yellow or striped snail shells, in the Costwolds of England (Bloom 143), and with hazelnuts (called "cobnuts"), also in England. The chestnuts, hardened by baking or soaking in a vinegar mixture, are attached to a string and then swung at each other, the objective being to destroy an opponent's chestnut (Milberg 152). The game is played in early autumn and, as mentioned earlier, goes by different names depending on the locale. Children growing up in Western Ontario in the 1940s and 50s collected horse chestnuts simply to appreciate their appearance when they were polished and also to play a sort of marbles game (Watson).

Another timeworn game, which is known to different children by different names, is "Soldiers." This game, played with a stalk of ribwort plantain, has been enjoyed in Britain for over 750 years. Children take turns batting each other's stalk until one of the plantain heads falls off. Played in many areas of England during the summer, it is also known as "Blackmen," "Cocks and Hens," "Fighting Cocks," "Hard Heads," "Knights," "Carldoddies," and in northern England and Scotland, "Kemps" (Opie, *Children's Games* 226).

Children quite often make weapons, with which to play, from natural objects. A very common such item is the slingshot made from a forked stick. Another is a spring gun made from an elderberry bush (reed, bamboo, or hickory will also work). A long, flexible stick is used like a bow and arrow in the United States (Bronner 202). Although creating these weapons literally from scratch is probably a more positive experience for children than playing with store-bought weapons, quite often they can be just as dangerous.

The dandelion appears to be a very versatile plant; as it is used in many different ways as a toy for children. I remember popping the yellow flower off

its stem with a flick of the thumb, chanting "Momma had a baby and its head popped off!" Throughout Ontario, children make chains of dandelions to wear as jewelry. (In northern Ontario, rosehips are also joined together to make jewelry.) In northern Ontario in the 1940s and 50s, some children would pull dandelions from the ground, competing to see who would get the longest root (Waston).

Shells, although far less common in some areas than plants or insects, have also been used as toys. In the Cotswolds, children could find globose terebrated shells filled with rock, which they called "pundibs." They were used as marbles and also to play "dibs" or "five-stones," which was also played with sheep knuckle-bones because they were easier to hold (porter and Russell 212). Children of the rainforest play with empty ground snail shells, using them as spinning tops (Sheppherd 216). Children must adjust some of their nature games according to the seasons. Most children in northern areas enjoy the winter, and there are numerous games and pastimes involving the snow. Briefly, these include building snowmen, snow forts and snow sculptures, tobogganing, having snow-ball fights, "snowing" someone (knocking them down, wiping snow in their face and putting snow down their clothing), and eating snow and icicles (Watson). In Ontario in the summer, there is a wheat-like type of grass with which children play a guessing game. One child asks another, "Tree or bush?" or the variation, "Tree or bush or bare-naked lady?" This game is fairly tedious and not particularly absorbing, and it is therefore played while children are sitting on the grass waiting for something else, for instance their turn at bat (Watson).

A seasonal game played by boys in the Cotswolds during Shakespeare's age was "Blind Egg." At a certain time of the year, there were many unhatched wild bird eggs around the countryside. The boys would place a few eggs in a row, be blindfolded and led a certain distance away from the eggs, and then try to smash as many a possible with a stick (Bloom 143).

These are only a few of the nature-oriented games children play. There are probably millions of others of which there are no published records because their knowledge is confined to the one or two children who invented and played them.

Unfortunately, one of the functions of children's nature-lore is to abuse animals. This is openly acknowledged and admitted, and sometimes considered cute. Although they cause the suffering and death of millions of small animals, these habits probably have some sort of positive effect on the children who practice them. In a way, they learn about death and its finality. They also learn anatomical information, no matter how basic it may be, from their spontaneous exercises in dissection. Violent and destructive impulses are channeled into outlets where the children at least don't hurt each other.

Catching insects and other small animals is a favorite pastime in many cultures. Perhaps this is because children like the feeling of controlling something smaller than they are, or because they want to nurture and care for something that is their own. Boys in Massachusetts try to lure bats into their tossed up hats by calling, "Bat, bat, come into my hat, And when I brew and when I bake, I'll give you a piece of bat-cake." A variation from Pennsylvania offers a piece of bacon instead (Bergen 56). Boys from Walkley (near Sheffield, England) try to catch butterflies by throwing coats over them while chanting this variation of the ladybug rhyme: "Butterfly, butterfly, flyaway home. Your house is on fire and the children all gone, all but one sat under a tree, writing a letter as fast as she can" (Addy 432). Dublin children catch bees (which they call "bumblers") in jars when they land on flowers (Brady 32). Australian children in the 1940s, 50s and 60s caught the many varieties of cicadas: "More than any other insects, cicadas played an important part in childhood" (Townsend 126). The children's interest in this insect originated with their misconception that the cicadas were worth money and could be sold to chemists who would boil them down to make medicine. Australian children also kept silkworms and tadpoles (Townsend 68,124, 125). Growing up in Ontario, we used to keep monarch caterpillars and watch them turn into butterflies.

Sometimes children catch animals to experience the malicious joy of making threats. Massachusetts children hold butterflies in their hands and repeat, "Butterfly, butterfly, give me some butter, and I'll let you go away." Daddy-long-legs spiders get similar treatment. American children of the nineteenth century believed that, if coerced, a spider would point (with its leg) the way to a lost herd of cattle. In New York, they would say, "Grandfather gray/ Tell me right away/ Where the cows are or I'll kill you!" (Bergen 58). In Dorchester, Ontario, they rhymes goes, "Granddaddy do/ Tell me where my cows are/ or I'll kill you!" (Bergen 59). Grasshoppers are also threatened. In Cape Breton, children say "Grasshopper, grasshopper/ Give me some money or I'll kill you!" or "Grasshopper, grasshopper, grasshopper green/ Give me some molasses today/ If you don't I'll kill you toady/ and bury you tomorrow/ Grasshopper, grasshopper green" (Halpert 167). Children from Durham County, England, would touch a snail to make it draw in it's horns and then say "snail, snail, put out your horn, or I'll kill your father and mother the mom" (Brockie 188).

As well as these practices, there are some children's games involving animals which are pure, physical torture. These range from pulling the legs off spiders or cooking insects under a magnifying glass (almost anywhere) to shooting a slingshot at frogs in central Ontario or blocking up ants nests Australia (Townsend 127) to playing catch with grasshoppers in central Ontario to putting fire-crackers in fishes mouths in central Ontario (Watson) and hitting cane toads over the house with golf clubs in Queensland (Townsend 16).

A Korean children's rhyme demonstrates how such cruelty is a natural part of children's play: "Let us play and do not tell/Taking thorns and cooking food/catching frogs to make some food/catching snakes to stir it with" (Landis 207).

Wishing, another type of children's nature-lore, is an attempt to manipulate fate, to change the present into a more appealing future. Children allow themselves wishes only on certain occasions, and there are usually rules involved (for example, a child cannot tell another child his or her wish, or it will not come true). This rigidity raises the value of wishes and preserves their magical quality. Some occasions on which one may wish include: seeing a flock of birds and crossing one's legs, catching a leaf as it falls from a tree, seeing a rainbow in Britain (Opie, *Lore and Language* 213, 217, 219), and blowing all of the seeds off of a dandelion in the United States (Knapp 240). I remember trying to earn a wish by catching a dandelion seed floating through the air, which we would call a "Joey." An interesting Dublin variation on this is a game called "Catching Jinny-Joe's Eggs." Children attempt to catch floating pieces of thistle-down (Brady 32). Earning a wish seems to involve both skill and luck.

One of the childhood treats that comes with interaction with nature is the tasting of various plants. Children are usually cautioned against eating the poisonous plants occurring near their home, but they generally know of some harmless and fun outdoor "snacks." Examples of these are "honeysuckle," "cheeses," and "liquory knots" which were all mentioned earlier. British children eat the leaves and shoots of the common Hawthorn in the spring and call them "bread and cheese" (Thiselton-Dyer 233). Northern Ontario children in the 1940s and 50s would suck on seed pods which they found to be sweet (Watson). Lastly, children almost everywhere steal fruit and vegetables from the yards of their neighbors. An apple taken from a neighbor's tree always seems to taste better than one given with a mother's blessing.

Children, while sometimes reckless, have a sense of danger, whether it is innate, learned from friends, or absorbed through years of parental warnings. A function of children's nature-lore is to warn against these dangers while indulging a primal need to imagine one's parents coming to a violent end. The eastern Border district game, "mother's-heart" (mentioned earlier), allows children to symbolically hurt their mother. A child holds the seed pouch out to another and invites him or her to grab it. It cracks easily, and the first child crows, "You've broken your mother's heart!" (Thiselton-Dyer 239). Many New England children are afraid of darning needles; they are afraid that the insects will sew up their mouths or fly in their ears and through their bodies (Johnson 100). Boys in New York in the nineteenth century believed that lizards counted teeth and that if, they counted all of a boy's teeth, the teeth would fall out and the boy would die. Consequently, boys would keep their

mouths closed when passing a pond where lizards were known to live (Starr 55). These beliefs would, no doubt, have a positive effect on children. They would teach children caution against imaginary dangers, so that when faced with real dangers, they would also be cautious.

The last function of children's nature customs to be discussed here is that of explanation. The extreme curiosity of children, coupled with their tendency to create colourful, creative identities and uses for natural objects, has bred some very interesting explanatory stories and legends. A simple one is the American children's belief that toadstools are made by toads (Bergen 121). A story with a connection to literature is told by children in northern England. They call the orchis mascula "dead man's thumb" and tell "with mysterious awe that the root was once the thumb of some unburied murderer." A reference to this tale can be found in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (Act V, Scene 7): "Long purples/That liberal shepherds give a grosser name/But our cold maids do dead man's fingers call them" (Thiselton-Dyer 235).

In conclusion, it seems that children's nature-lore is quite flexible, in that many plants and animals take on different meanings, depending on context and location. Also, certain meanings are expressed by many different forms of nature. Regardless of these variables, certain types of customs seem to be more commonly practiced, in particular, those connected to the magical, supernatural side of life. Practical information, such as edible plants, cures or tools are not mentioned nearly as often as superstitions and methods of divination in the literature researched. What this tells us about childhood is that on a very primal, ancient level, in the beliefs that really matter to children, magic is the most important element of nature.

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